

SUSPICION

PENNY MOVED swiftly to the open cabin door, gazing toward the darkening woods. No one was visible amid the shadows. Yet she was certain that Mrs. Deline had signaled to someone lurking among the trees.

The widow had turned from the window to unfasten the lid of the picnic hamper.

"Since you girls are here you may as well stay and share my supper," she said without warmth. "There's enough food for all."

Louise's chin tilted proudly. The invitation was grudgingly given and she meant to decline. Penny forestalled her by saying:

"How nice of you, Mrs. Deline! Of course we'll be delighted to remain."

Mrs. Deline made no reply, though obviously she had not expected an acceptance. Irritably she laid out the picnic dishes—sandwiches, a salad, cake,

cookies, and fruit—all carefully prepared and cooked at the hotel kitchen.

"You certainly did bring plenty of food for one person," Penny commented, helping herself to a chicken sandwich. "Isn't that clothing in the bottom of the basket?"

"Only a blanket." Mrs. Deline closed the lid firmly. "I thought I might need it if I should sit on the damp ground."

Hungry as bears, Penny and Louise, did not try to curb their healthy, young appetites. Mrs. Deline, on the other hand, scarcely nibbled at the food. Several times she arose and paced nervously to the window.

"It's growing dark and I should return to the hotel," she said the instant the girls had finished eating. "I'll not bother to repack the lunch basket."

"Oh, we'll help you pick up everything," Penny offered.

"Please don't bother. I'll merely pay the hotel for the basket."

Penny was convinced that Mrs. Deline deliberately intended to leave the hamper behind. Despite the deep inroads she and Louise had made, considerable food remained. It occurred to her that the widow hoped to leave what remained so that the person hiding in the woods might come to the cabin for it after the party had gone.

"I can't be bothered with a heavy basket," Mrs. Deline said impatiently. "We'll just leave it on the table."

"Oh, the rangers wouldn't like to have us leave food here," Penny protested. "It will only take a minute to clean up everything."

Disregarding Mrs. Deline's order, she began to repack the remains of the lunch.

"But I don't wish to carry the basket all the way to the hotel!"

"Louise and I will help you."

Tossing her head, Mrs. Deline walked out of the cabin, allowing the door to slam behind her. Louise and Penny finished packing the lunch and hastened down the trail in pursuit.

"Maybe we shouldn't cross her so," Louise whispered uneasily. "I think she intended to meet someone here!"

"I'm sure of it," agreed Penny. "We spiced her little plan. I have an idea who she intended to meet too!"

"Who?"

Penny could not answer, for by this time she and Louise were practically at Mrs. Deline's heels. The widow was walking as fast as she could.

"You'll have to keep the basket," she told the girls irritably. "I'm sure I'll never carry it back to the hotel."

All the way to the Parker camp Mrs. Deline ignored Penny and Louise. And as they bade her goodbye, she barely responded.

"Can't we drive you down to the hotel in the car?"

Penny offered, feeling slightly ashamed of her actions.

"Thank you, no," the widow answered icily. "You've done quite enough for one day." She vanished down the darkening road.

After Mrs. Deline was beyond view, the girls retraced their way to the spring for the water bucket. As they approached, they thought for a moment that they heard retreating footsteps. The realization that they were alone in the woods, made them a bit nervous. Hurriedly they recovered the bucket and carried it to camp.

"Now tell me what you think, Penny!" Louise commanded when they were inside the tent.

"Why, it's clear as crystal." Penny struck a match to the wick of the gasoline lantern and hung it on a hook of the tent pole. "Mrs. Deline went to the cabin intending to meet someone. She carried extra food, a blanket, and if I'm not mistaken, clothing for a man."

"You thought she signaled from the window?"

"I'm sure she did, Lou. She warned the person, whoever he was, not to approach. She hoped by leaving the basket behind to get it into his hands after we'd gone."

"You thwarted her in that."

"We did together," Penny chuckled. Her face suddenly became sober. "Lou—"

"Yes?"

"It just occurred to me! Maybe the man she intended to meet was the same fellow who stole food from our camp."

"That's possible. But why should Mrs. Deline be interested in a common tramp?"

"How do we know that fellow was a tramp?" Penny speculated. "Jerry told us about a young soldier that had escaped from a Canadian prison camp. Mrs. Deline may be trying to help him by supplying food and heavy clothing!"

"As usual, Penny, aren't you leaping to hasty conclusions?"

"Maybe I am, but everything fits in beautifully. I've thought from the first that Mrs. Deline was nothing less than a spy or an international crook."

"You've aired that theory before," Louise said, stretching out on the cot. "Wonder when your father will get here?"

"I wish he would come," Penny replied, glancing anxiously toward the road. "At least I have one consolation."

"What's that?"

"I know he's not with Mrs. Deline. Oh, Lou,

think how horrible it would be to have a spy for a stepmother!"

"It would be something different anyhow," Louise chuckled. "Want to listen to the radio awhile?"

"Okay," Penny agreed, "maybe we can tune in that outlaw station. It's about time for the regular, nightly broadcast."

Closing themselves into the car, the girls tried without success to get the outlaw shortwave station. Tuning instead to a dance orchestra, they discussed the day's happenings and made elaborate plans for the morrow.

"I'm really going to work," Penny announced grimly. "No Mrs. Deline ever will outwit me! Our first job must be to find that package she buried in the sand."

"And what of the person hiding in the woods?"

"The rangers ought to take over that part," Penny peered out through the car window at the dark woods which hemmed in the camp. "Somehow," she admitted, "I don't like the idea of being here at night. I'm not exactly afraid, but—"

"Listen!" Louise ordered sharply. "Someone's coming!"

Penny snapped off the radio. Tensely, the girls watched the road. The next instant they relaxed, for it was Mr. Parker who trudged wearily up the

slope. Seeing Penny and Louise in the car, he came over to apologize for being so late.

"I've been with Jerry for the past two hours," he explained. "Time went faster than I realized."

"Any news?" Penny asked eagerly.

"Not about the radio station if that's what you mean. The fellow got away with his portable outfit slick as a whistle."

"The authorities have no idea who the man is, Dad?"

"Not the slightest. So far they've not been able to break the code he uses either. But in time they'll get him."

Having gleaned what information they could from Mr. Parker, the girls related their own adventure. As they fully expected, he made light of the episode at the cabin.

"Why should Mrs. Deline expect to meet anyone there?" he argued. "Penny, I'm afraid you don't understand her and misinterpret her actions."

"I don't understand her, that's certain."

"As to a man loitering about the camp," Mr. Parker resumed, "I've been worried about that ever since food was stolen. As I must be gone so much of the time, why wouldn't it be better for us to move to the hotel?"

Penny stiffened for an argument, and then suddenly changed her mind.

"All right, Dad," she astonished him by saying, "as far as I'm concerned, we can move tomorrow. I've had enough of the lonesome life."

"Why, that's fine!" Mr. Parker said heartily. "Splendid!"

After he had moved on, to sit for awhile by the dying embers of the fire, Louise remarked to Penny that explanations were in order.

"How come you're ready to desert the rough and rugged life?" she demanded. "At first you were dead set against moving into the hotel."

Penny carefully raised the car window so that her father would not overhear.

"I believe in fighting the Enemy on his own territory," she explained elaborately. "Mrs. Deline will bear watching. I intend to devote all my waking hours to the cause."

"So Jerry has nothing to do with it?"

"Jerry?"

"You wouldn't want to move to the hotel so you'd see more of him?"

"What an idea!" Penny scoffed. "Whoever thought of such a thing!"

"You did or I'm no mind reader."

"Well, it may have crossed my mind," Penny acknowledged with a giggle. "In fact, I can see quite a few advantages to hotel life. With luck we'll yet make something of this vacation!"

VISITORS NOT PERMITTED

PENNY STOOD before the mirror in the hotel room and struggled to coax a little curl into her damp hair. She and Louise had spent two hours splashing in the surf that morning. The salt water had tightened their skins and produced discouraging results with their tresses.

"This place does have it over a forest camp," Penny said, gazing about the comfortably furnished room she shared with Louise. Her father's room was three doors down the hall. "A shower bath, no meals to cook, no dishes to wash, and the sea at one's elbow."

"I like it better," replied Louise. She had curled up kitten fashion on the bed and was making deep inroads into a box of chocolates. "So far though, we've not done much fancy sleuthing."

"We've only been here a few hours. Where do you suppose Mrs. Deline keeps herself?"

"In her room no doubt. Why do you worry about her so much, Penny?"

Penny twisted a few ringlets over her finger and abandoned the project as hopeless. "Lou, you know all the prize answers without asking me," she said. "I've told you a dozen times why I distrust that woman."

"Doesn't it all simmer down to one thing? You're jealous as a green-eyed cat!"

"Maybe I do dislike her," Penny grinned. "On second thought, I'm sure of it! But facts are facts and have nothing to do with my personal feelings. In the first place, didn't she get Dad to bring her with us to Sunset Beach?"

"But what does that prove? She has no car of her own and the trains are so crowded."

"I think she knew that Dad was coming here to try to dig up a story about the outlaw radio station," Penny went on, unruffled. "She's probably pumped him of information."

"Your father knows how to look after himself."

"That's what *he* thinks!" Penny muttered. "I wouldn't place any wagers on it myself. Why, he's been as blind as a bat."

"I'm afraid you see enough for two or three people," Louise chuckled.

"I told you, didn't I, how that vampire tried to steal our car while we were on our way here?"

"Two or three times, darling."

"Well, it would bear repeating. I think she intended to meet someone that night—perhaps the same person who was hiding in the woods!"

Louise, methodically eating chocolates, mulled over the possibility.

"Jerry told us that an escaped flier from a Canadian prison camp may be hiding somewhere near here," Penny resumed, wandering to the window. "Perhaps Mrs. Deline is trying to help him!"

"You have a new theory every minute," Louise yawned. "Why not think up one and stick to it?"

Penny did not answer for at that moment she observed Jerry Livingston leaving the veranda of the hotel.

"Come on, Lou!" she cried, jerking her chum off the bed. "I want to see Jerry before he escapes!"

"Talk about Mrs. Deline pursuing your defenseless father!" Louise protested as she was pulled down the hall to the elevator. "Her tactics at least are more subtle than yours!"

"This is different," Penny retorted shamelessly. "Jerry and I are old friends."

Swinging through the revolving doors of the hotel, the girls raced after Jerry. Breathless from running, they finally overtook him far down the boardwalk.

"Why, hello," he greeted them with a broad smile. "I hear you've moved into the hotel."

"Lock, stock and barrel," Penny laughed. "We want to be in the thick of things. Any news about the radio station?"

"Nothing I can report. I'm on my way now to Intercept Headquarters."

"Did you see Dad this morning?"

"Only for a few minutes. He's doing a little special work for me."

"At least I'm glad it's for you and not Mrs. Deline," Penny said stiffly. "Jerry, there are some things you should know about that woman."

"Suppose you unburden your heart," Jerry invited, seating himself on a sand dune. "I have about ten minutes to listen."

"Don't encourage her," sighed Louise. "She's slightly cracked on the subject, you know."

"Nevertheless, Penny has ideas at times," Jerry paid her tribute. "Shoot!"

Talking like a whirlwind, Penny delved deeply into the subject of Mrs. Deline. She repeated how the widow had buried a package in the sand, but it was not until the episode of the cabin was described that Jerry really seemed interested.

"Penny, at first I didn't take your Mrs. Deline talk very seriously," he admitted. "Perhaps you have something after all!"

"I'm sure of it, Jerry!"

"Have you reported to the park rangers?"

"Dad may have seen them, I'm not sure. We left camp in a big rush."

"Then I'll take care of that, Penny. We'll have the park searched again and try to find that fellow!"

"Then you do believe he's the escaped flier!" Penny exclaimed.

"Probably not," was Jerry's discouraging reply. "Nevertheless, we can't afford to overlook any possibility."

"What about the package in the sand?"

"You remember where it was buried?"

"Approximately."

"I'll not have time to go with you now," Jerry said, looking at his wrist watch.

"Louise and I haven't much to do this morning. We'll be glad to search."

"Go ahead," Jerry urged. "If you fail then I can take over. The important thing is not to tip off your hand. Don't let anyone suspect what you're about."

Penny and Louise nodded soberly. They felt rather important to have been assigned a definite task.

"Report to me as soon as you find that package," Jerry urged as he started on. "It may contain something of vital importance. It may not. We'll withhold judgment until we have the facts."

Left to themselves, the girls lost not a moment in hastening to the section of beach where Mrs. Deline had been seen to bury the package.

"Now just where was it?" Penny asked, gazing about the deserted dunes. "What became of our marker?"

"We left a stick to show the exact spot."

"Not a sign of it now. What wretched luck!"

Though the girls knew the general locality where the package had been buried, all of the dunes looked discouragingly alike. Not a footprint remained to guide them.

"I'll bet a cent Mrs. Deline came back here and removed that stick!" Penny declared. "Maybe she dug up the package too!"

"Anyone could have taken the stick. Why do you think she did it?"

"Because she watched us digging for the package. Well, let's look for it anyhow."

With none too much enthusiasm, the girls set to work. The tide was much lower than upon their last visit and the shoreline did not look the same. Nor could they agree within forty feet of the right place to dig.

"You try one dune, and I'll work on another," Penny offered as a compromise.

An hour of unavailing work found the pair too discouraged to keep on digging.

"If this is the right place, Mrs. Deline or someone has removed the package," Penny declared, sinking back on her heels.

"We may as well give up," Louise added wearily. Penny slid down the dune and emptied sand from her shoes.

"There should be an easy way to beat Mrs. Deline at her own little game," she remarked thoughtfully. "For instance, why does she always wear that jade green charm?"

"Because she likes it I'd imagine."

"But wouldn't you think she'd take it off at night?"

"Perhaps she does, Penny."

"Not the night I was with her. I distinctly gained the impression that there was something about it she was afraid I'd see."

"A message contained inside?"

"That's been my theory from the first, Lou. Now if only we could lay our hands on the charm—"

"Finding the package would be a lot easier. We can't waylay the woman and take the jade elephant by force. Or can we?"

"No," Penny agreed reluctantly, "I don't think Dad would like that. And there's always the possibility I might be wrong."

"The probability, you mean," corrected Louise.

Penny retied her shoes and glanced toward the hotel. Far up the beach she saw Mrs. Deline, and the widow was walking slowly toward the sand dunes.

"Duck!" Penny ordered, rolling over one of the high ridges. "We don't want her to see us here. She'll suspect what we've been up to."

Louise crouched behind the dune with her chum, though she complained that she felt silly doing it. Apparently, Mrs. Deline had not seen the girls. She came steadily on.

Drawing close, she peered directly at the dune where the girls had taken refuge. For a second they feared that she had seen them. But she passed on without another glance.

"It looks to me as though she's on her way to the lighthouse again," Penny remarked after Mrs. Deline was far down the beach. "Wonder why she goes there so often?"

"I thought visitors weren't allowed."

"According to the rules they're not."

From behind the dune, the girls kept watch of the widow. Presently they saw her climb the steps of the lighthouse and disappear into the interior.

"Well, that settles it!" Penny exclaimed indignantly.

"Settles what?" Louise straightened up, brushing sand from her skirt.

"If Mrs. Deline can get into that lighthouse, so can I. We'll make an issue of it!"

"Not today," said Louise dubiously.

"Right now!" Penny corrected, starting down the beach. "That lighthouse is government property, and as citizens we have certain rights. Let's assert them and see what happens!"

CHAPTER

18

INSIDE THE LIGHTHOUSE

UNCHALLENGED, PENNY and Louise reached the base of the lighthouse. But as they slowly climbed the iron stairs, their courage fast slipped away.

"What will we say to the keeper?" Louise faltered. "I've even forgotten his name."

"I haven't," said Penny. "It's Jim McCoy. If Mrs. Deline is allowed inside the tower, shouldn't we have the same privileges?"

"She's a personal friend."

"That should make no difference," Penny argued. "This is government property."

"Let's not do it," Louise pleaded, holding back.

Having proceeded so far, Penny was in no mood to retreat. Quickly, lest she too lose her courage, she rapped hard on the tower door.

Minutes elapsed. Then the heavy oak door swung

back and Jim McCoy, the burly keeper, peered out at the girls. His bushy brows drew together in an angry scowl.

"You here again!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," said Penny, making the word crisp and firm.

"I'll have to report you if you keep pestering me," the keeper scolded. "How many times have I told you no visitors are allowed?"

"But you don't treat everyone the same!" Penny remonstrated. "Mrs. Deline just came here."

"Mrs. Deline? Who's she?"

"Why, a woman who stays at the hotel. She came through this door not five minutes ago!"

"You must have imagined it. I've had no visitors."

Penny's silence said more plainly than words that she did not believe the keeper.

"So you think I'm lying, eh?" he demanded unpleasantly. "Okay, come in and see for yourselves. I'm breaking a rule to invite you into the tower, but maybe then you'll be satisfied and quite bothering me. We have work to do here, you know."

The keeper stepped aside so that the girls might enter.

"My living quarters," he said curtly. "You see, I have no visitors."

Decidedly ill at ease, the girls gazed about the little circular room. The walls were lined with built-in cupboards. Nearly all of the furniture had been

made with a view to conserving space. As Mr. McCoy had said, there were no visitors—no evidence that Mrs. Deline ever had been there.

"Are you satisfied?" the keeper demanded unpleasantly.

"But we were sure Mrs. Deline came here," Penny stammered.

"There's been no one today except early this morning when a government inspector paid me a visit."

Penny did not believe the man but she deemed it wise to appear to do so.

"I'm sorry," she apologized. "I guess we have made nuisances of ourselves."

"That's all right," the keeper said in a less unfriendly tone. "Kids are kids. Now that you're here, look around a bit."

"Oh, thank you," Louise replied gratefully. "I've always wanted to see the inside of a lighthouse."

"I have some work to do," Mr. McCoy announced. "The light's not been operating right and I'm trying to get the mechanism adjusted. I'll be back."

He went out, allowing the door to slam hard.

The girls surveyed their surroundings with keen interest. On a table near the window there was a shortwave radio. A circular couch occupied another curving corner of the room.

"What became of Mrs. Deline?" Penny whispered. "She certainly came here."

"Of course she did! We saw her plain as day!"

"She must be somewhere in the tower. Probably there's a room above this one."

Penny tiptoed to the door and tried to open it. To her surprise and chagrin, it would not budge.

"My Great Aunt!" she whispered. "We're locked in!"

"Maybe the door's just stuck." Louise strode across the room to help Penny. Both of them tried without success to open it.

"Let's shout and pound!" Louise suggested.

"No, wait! I think we've been locked in here on purpose."

"Oh, Penny!"

"Now don't get nervous. The keeper's no fool. He'll have to let us out."

"But why would he lock us in?"

"Because he's provoked at us for one reason, Lou. Another, something's going on here that he doesn't want us to know about. He and Mrs. Deline may be having a tête-à-tête in the room above."

"Then let's listen. Maybe we can overhear their conversation."

Penny nodded and fell silent. Though the girls listened for a long while, no sound reached their ears.

"This is a nice situation!" Louise fumed. "I think the door locked itself. We ought to shout for help."

"Goose, a door doesn't lock itself."

"This one might have a trick catch."

"It was Mr. Jim McCoy who accomplished the trick," Penny said. "Listen! Someone's coming now."

Plainly the girls could hear footsteps on the iron balcony outside the door. A moment later they were able to distinguish a murmur of men's voices. The footsteps moved on and a moment later they heard a door close overhead.

"Another visitor!" Penny announced. "Did you hear what was said, Lou?"

"Couldn't make out a word."

"Nor could I. But that voice sounded familiar. I'm sure I've heard it somewhee."

"I had the same feeling, Penny."

The girls listened intently, hoping to overhear conversation on the floor above. However, the walls of the lighthouse were so thick that not a word reached them. Now and then they thought they heard Mrs. Deline's high pitched voice.

"Louise, it's just come to me!" Penny whispered a moment later. "I believe Mr. McCoy's visitor may be George Emory!"

"The voice did sound a little like his. But why would he come here?"

"Maybe we've under-rated George Emory. Why, all this time he may have been trying to get information from us."

"He did ask us quite a few questions, particularly about your father."

"And he seemed to know a lot about that outlaw radio station, Lou. Maybe he tried to throw us off the track by suggesting that we watch old Jake Skagway."

"We certainly fell for it, Penny."

"We did, if you assume that George Emory is upstairs having a conference with Mrs. Deline and the lighthouse keeper. But we're not sure."

"No, we're not, Penny. One easily can be mistaken in voices."

Determined to hear more, Penny cautiously climbed up on the radio table, so that her head and ear were close to the ceiling.

"Can you make out anything?" Louise whispered.

Penny shook her head in disgust. After a few minutes she dropped lightly down from the table.

"Walls are too thick," she announced. "I could hear three voices though. Two were men and the other, a woman."

"Then Mrs. Deline must be here. The keeper lied about that part."

Presently the girls heard footsteps again on the iron stairway. They moved to the window, hoping to see whomever was descending from the room above. However, the little round aperture was so situated that it gave a view of only one side of the Point.

They could not see the stairway nor the stretch of beach leading to the hotel.

"We're certainly learning a lot!" Louise said crossly. "I've had enough of this. Let's shout for help."

"All right," Penny agreed. "We may as well find out whether or not we're prisoners."

Crossing to the heavy oak door, she pounded hard on the panels. Almost at once the girls heard someone coming.

"Don't let on what we suspect," Penny warned her companion.

The next moment the door swung open to admit the keeper of the light.

A LOCKED DOOR

"I WAS gone a little longer than I meant to be," Jim McCoy apologized as he came into the room. "Did I keep you waiting?"

"We probably wouldn't have waited if you hadn't locked the door!" Louise said sharply.

The keeper's eyebrows lifted and he looked slightly amused. "Locked in?" he echoed.

"Yes, we couldn't get the door open."

"Oh, it sticks sometimes. Been intending to fix it for several days. If you had pushed hard it would have opened."

"We certainly pushed hard enough," Penny said dryly. She was more than ever certain that the lighthouse keeper had unlocked the door only a moment before entering. Clearly, he had meant to prevent Louise and her from seeing and hearing what went on in the room above.

"Come along," the keeper invited. "I'll show you the tower."

"No thank you," Penny replied coldly. "We've spent so much time here that we'll have to be getting back to the hotel."

"As you like." The keeper shrugged, and looked relieved by the decision.

Jim McCoy stepped away from the door, and the girls hastened down the iron stairway. No one was in sight on the beach. Whoever had visited the lighthouse during the time they were imprisoned, had disappeared.

When they were well down the beach, Louise and Penny slackened their pace. Glancing back they saw that the keeper of the light still stood on the tiny iron balcony watching them.

"That man gives me the creeps," Louise remarked. "Did you believe what he said about the door sticking?"

"I did not," Penny returned with emphasis. "I think he locked us in on purpose, probably because he was expecting visitors and didn't want us to see too much."

"As it turned out we didn't learn a thing."

"We have no proof of anything," Penny admitted slowly. "Nevertheless, we're pretty sure Mrs. Deline visited the tower."

"George Emory too."

"That part is pure guess," Penny said, "so we don't dare consider it too seriously. Did you ever see Mrs. Deline with George Emory?"

"Why, no. But then, we've not been at the hotel long."

"Let's find Jerry or Dad," Penny said abruptly. "We ought to report to them."

Returning to the hotel, the girls looked in vain for Mr. Parker. The publisher was not in his room nor anywhere in the lobby. Jerry apparently had not returned from Intercept Headquarters.

"There's Mrs. Deline," Louise whispered, jerking her head toward a high-backed chair not far from the elevator.

The widow was reading a newspaper. If she saw the girls she paid no attention to them.

"Let's talk to her and see what we can learn," Louise suggested.

Penny had another thought. "No," she vetoed the suggestion. "Mrs. Deline would be more likely to learn things from us. That woman is clever."

Just then Mrs. Deline arose, picked up her purse, and went out the front door of the hotel. On their way to the elevator, Penny and Louise noticed that the woman carelessly had left a handkerchief and her room key lying on the chair.

"I'll turn them in at the desk," Louise said, picking up the articles.

"Wait, Lou!"

Louise glanced at her chum in surprise.

"I have an idea!" Penny revealed, lowering her voice. "Are you game to try something risky?"

"Well, I don't know."

"This chance is tailor-made for us!" Penny went on. "Mrs. Deline simply handed her room key over to us. Let's use our opportunity."

"Enter her room?" Louise asked, shocked.

"Why not? FBI agents think nothing of examining the belongings of a suspected person."

"But we're not FBI agents, Penny. I don't want to do it without asking Jerry."

"By that time it will be too late. It's now or never."

"Mrs. Deline might catch us in the act."

"That's a chance we'll have to take." Penny, in possession of the room key, walked to the front door of the hotel. She was reassured to see that Mrs. Deline had seated herself on a bench some distance from the veranda.

"The coast's clear," Penny reported, coming back to Louise. "What do you say?"

"Well, I suppose so," Louise consented nervously. An elevator shot the girls up to the fourth floor.

To locate Mrs. Deline's room required but a moment, and the halls fortunately were deserted. Penny fitted the key into the lock and pushed open the door.

"We'll have to work fast," she said, closing it behind them again.

The room was in perfect order. Only a few toilet articles had been set out on the dresser. Mrs. Deline's suitcase was only half unpacked.

"It looks to me as if the widow is holding herself ready to fly at a moment's notice," Penny commented. "Otherwise, why didn't she unpack everything?"

"What do you expect to find here?" Louise asked nervously. "Let's get it over with fast, Penny."

"Start with the bureau drawers," Penny instructed. "Search for any papers, letters or the sort. I'll go through the suitcase."

Carefully the girls began examining Mrs. Deline's personal belongings. Almost at once Louise reported that the bureau contained nothing of interest. Penny, however, had more luck. She came upon a pearl-handled revolver buried beneath a pile of silk under-clothing.

"Jeepers!" she whispered, touching the weapon gingerly. "Now will you believe me when I say that the widow isn't the sweet little girl she'd have us believe!"

Louise's eyes had opened wide at sight of the revolver.

"And here's that white suit she wore!" Penny cried, lifting out a folded garment from the suitcase. "Look, Lou!"

From the skirt of the suit had been cut a neat, square hole.

"Well, of all things!" Louise exclaimed. "What's the meaning of that?"

"Mrs. Deline wrote something on the skirt—don't you remember? Probably she used a pen with invisible ink."

"But why on her skirt, Penny?"

"She'd just been to the lighthouse. Perhaps she learned something there and she wanted to write it down before she forgot. Possibly she didn't have any paper. Then when she got back here, she either destroyed the message, or sent it to someone."

"Well, I don't know," Louise said doubtfully. "It's all so fantastic. I wouldn't believe a bit of it except for this revolver. Having it doesn't look so good."

"And don't forget the green elephant charm," Penny reminded her. "I wish we could find it here."

"Not a chance. Mrs. Deline always wears it around her neck. She had it on today. I noticed."

Time fast was elapsing and the girls were worried lest someone discover them in the room. Hastily they

replaced everything as they had found it, and relocking the door, stepped out into the hall.

"What's our next move?" Louise asked as they buzzed for a down-going elevator.

"To tell Jerry and Dad, of course. But before that, there's one thing I wish we could do, Lou. It would give everything we have to report a more substantial basis."

"What's that, Penny?"

"Why don't we get our hands on the jade green elephant? I've a hunch that it contains something important—perhaps evidence that would crack the case wide open."

"And just how do you propose that we acquire the charm?" Louise asked sarcastically. "Are we to waylay Mrs. Deline and take it by force?"

"Afraid that wouldn't do."

"There's no other way to get it. Mrs. Deline wears that charm as if it were her skin. I've never seen her without it."

The elevator was coming down so Penny spoke hurriedly.

"There is a way," she said softly, "if only it will work. Think we could get Mrs. Deline to go bathing in the surf with us?"

"And ruin that lovely hair-do? Don't be silly."

"All the same, it's worth trying," Penny urged.

"Let's go to our room now and get our bathing suits."

"I don't see any point in it."

"You will," Penny laughed, entering the elevator. "If my little plan works we'll have keen sport and maybe do our country a good turn!"

NYMPHS OF THE SEA

"HOW YOU expect to get Mrs. Deline to go swimming with us is beyond me!" Louise opined as she and Penny left the hotel, their bathing suits swinging over their arms. "It's none too warm today. She dislikes us both intensely. Furthermore, she never swims."

"Any other reasons?" Penny asked cheerfully.

"That should be enough."

"Just wait and watch," Penny chuckled. "I just hope she doesn't suspect we've been prowling in her room. If she got wise to that she'd report us to the hotel management."

Before leaving the hotel the girls had taken care to drop the room key in the chair where Mrs. Deline had left it. They were confident that no one had seen them take the key or enter the room.

The widow remained as the girls last had seen her.

She was sitting on a bench facing the sea, her gaze fixed on the deep blue line of the horizon. As the girls passed beside her, she looked up, frowning slightly.

"We're on our way to the bath house," said Penny, her tone implying that the matter was one of great importance.

"Really?" Mrs. Deline's voice barely was polite.

"Wouldn't you like to come with us?" Louise invited cordially.

The invitation took Mrs. Deline by surprise. "No, thank you," she declined. "I can't swim."

"We'll teach you," offered Penny.

"You're too kind. I don't care for the water. I particularly detest cold water."

"The air is warming up," Penny tried to encourage her. "Why not try it with us?"

"Nothing could induce me."

Louise nodded grimly, as much as to say that she had known how it would be. Penny would not give up. She decided to adopt drastic measures.

"No, I didn't suppose you would go into the water," she said. "You're probably afraid you'll get salt water on that lovely skin of yours, or muss up your hair."

"Oh!" gasped Mrs. Deline. "The very idea!"

"Isn't that the reason?" Penny pursued ruthlessly. "You have to protect your beauty?"

"No, it's not the reason!" Mrs. Deline snapped. "If I had a bathing suit, I'd show you!"

"You can use mine," Penny said promptly. "Louise has an extra one she'll let me have."

Mrs. Deline looked trapped and angry. She sprang to her feet.

"All right, I'll go swimming!" she announced. "If I catch pneumonia I suppose you'll be satisfied!"

"Oh, you'll love the water once you're in," Penny said sweetly. "The bath house is this way."

Mrs. Deline spent so long getting into the borrowed suit that the girls began to fear she had outwitted them. But just as they were ready to give up, the woman came out of the dressing room. Penny's suit was a size too small for her so that she looked as if she had been poured into it. Her legs were skinny, her hips bulged. She still wore the elephant charm.

"Don't I wish Dad could see her now!" Penny muttered. "What a disillusionment!"

Ignoring the girls, Mrs. Deline walked stiffly toward the surf. A wave rolled in, wetting her to the knees. Mrs. Deline shrieked and backed away.

"It's freezing!" she complained.

"You have to get wet all at once," Penny instructed kindly. "This way."

She seized Mrs. Deline's hand and pulled her toward the deeper water.

"Let me go!" Mrs. Deline protested, trying to shake free. "Stop it!"

Penny held fast to her hand. A big roller broke over their heads. Mrs. Deline sputtered and choked and struggled.

"Oh, this is dreadful!" she whimpered.

"You have to watch for the waves and jump just as they strike you," Penny laughed. "Now!"

She leaped, but the widow mistimed the roller. It struck her a resounding whack on her shoulders and head.

"Oh! Oh!" she moaned.

"Here comes another!" warned Louise. "A big one too!"

Mrs. Deline broke away from Penny. She started to run for shore. The big roller overtook her, sweeping her from her feet.

This was the opportunity that Penny awaited. Pretending that she too had lost her balance, she allowed the tide to carry her straight into Mrs. Deline. For an instant they both were beneath the surface of the water.

Penny worked fast. Clutching Mrs. Deline as if in terror, she yanked hard at the slender chain that held the green elephant charm. It snapped and the jade piece came off into her hands. Deftly she thrust the charm into the front of her bathing suit. Then she popped up above the water, winking at Louise.

Mrs. Deline scrambled to her feet, clutching at the broken chain.

"See what you've done!" she accused Penny. "You pulled it apart. My beautiful charm has fallen into the water!"

"Let me help you look for it," Louise offered, darting forward.

As the pair were groping about on the sandy floor, another wave rolled in. Penny neglected to warn Mrs. Deline. It struck her from behind, toppling her over on her face. Her cap slipped awry and she swallowed salt water.

"Oh, I can't stand any more of this!" she spluttered. "It was cruel of you to get me to come into the surf! Now I've lost my charm, and it was all your fault, Penny Parker."

"I'll buy you another ornament," the girl offered. Seeing Mrs. Deline's distress she felt a bit ashamed of herself.

"Another ornament!" the widow mocked. "I don't want another! I want the one I've lost. It's of vital importance to me to keep it."

Mrs. Deline made another futile search for the charm.

"It's been washed away," she cried. "I'll never find it now!"

Glaring furiously at Penny, she turned and fled to the bath house.

"Did she really lose the charm?" Louise demanded the moment the girls were alone. "Or did you get it, Penny?"

Penny answered by producing the green elephant charm from the front of her bathing suit where she had hidden it.

"Easy as taking candy from a babe," she chuckled. "My, but was she hopping mad!"

"You may not be laughing if your father hears about this," Louise warned. "He's apt to look at matters from a different angle than we do."

Penny skipped through the shallow water and sat down on the beach well beyond the reach of the waves. Louise flopped beside her. Eagerly they examined the jade green trinket.

"Looks like any ordinary charm to me," Louise remarked. "No special carving."

"It should open," Penny said. "The first night when Mrs. Deline and I shared a room, I was sure I saw her close it."

Louise turned the charm over and pried at it with a hairpin.

"It does have a back lid!" she exclaimed excitedly. "Penny, I think it's going to open!"

"I'll say magic words while you work," Penny laughed. "Furthermore, I'll keep watch of the bath house. We don't want Mrs. Deline to pop out here and see us."

Louise pried again at the lid of the charm. It gave suddenly.

Inside the tiny cavity was a folded piece of paper. While Louise stared in delighted awe, Penny gained possession. With nervous haste she unfolded the paper. She gazed at it a moment and her face fell.

"Why, I can't make anything of the writing!" she declared in disappointment. "The words don't make sense."

"Just a mess of letters," Louise agreed, peering over her shoulder.

The girls were decidedly let-down for they had gone to much trouble and risk to obtain the jade ornament. But Penny's disappointment did not last long. As she stared at the paper, its significance dawned upon her.

"Why, this is important, Lou!" she cried. "Maybe we've stumbled into something big!"

"How do you mean?"

"Don't you see?" Penny demanded triumphantly. "The letters of this message must comprise a secret code! If only we can break it down we may learn all we need to know about Mrs. Deline and her strange friends!"

CHAPTER

21

THE CARDBOARD BOX

WHILE PENNY and Louise were puzzling over the strange writing found inside the jade charm, Mrs. Deline appeared in the doorway of the bath house. Barely in time to escape detection, the girls hid the tiny elephant and the paper in the sand.

Mrs. Deline crossed the beach to speak to the girls. Her hair was damp and stringy, her face pinched and blue from cold.

"Here's your suit!" she snapped, slapping the wet garment into the sand at Penny's feet. "I hope you enjoyed the swim! I'm sure I didn't."

Turning her back, the widow marched to the hotel.

The moment Mrs. Deline had disappeared into the white brick building, Penny dug the jade elephant and paper from the sand.

"Let's get dressed," she urged Louise. "We've no time to waste."

So thrilled were the girls over what they had accomplished that they could talk of nothing else. Penny felt that by obtaining the jade elephant she had proven her case.

"You thought I was only jealous of Mrs. Deline," she told Louise triumphantly as they dressed in adjoining booths. "Now what do you say?"

"That you're a genius!" Louise praised. "Mrs. Deline certainly is mixed up in some shady business."

Once dressed, the girls wrapped the jade elephant in a handkerchief and carried it to the hotel. Jerry was nowhere to be found, and a bellboy told Penny that her father had gone for a walk.

"Perhaps we can work the message out ourselves," Penny suggested hopefully. "Let's try."

In their hotel room, the girls spent an hour attempting to decipher the strange jargon of letters appearing on the paper. At the end of that time, Penny tossed aside her pencil in disgust.

"This is a job for an expert," she declared. "I certainly don't classify as one."

The telephone jingled. Penny answered it and was delighted to hear Jerry's familiar voice. He was down in the lobby and had been told that the girls wished to see him.

"We certainly do!" Penny answered gaily. "Hold everything! We'll be with you in a jiffy."

The elevator being entirely too slow, the girls raced down the stairs. Breathlessly they started to tell Jerry what they had learned.

"Not here!" he said quickly. "Let's go outside where we won't be overheard."

Once out in the open with no one close by, Jerry lent an attentive ear to Penny's tale of their afternoon adventure. He did not have much to say in return, but he studied the jade green elephant and the paper with deep interest.

"You don't think it's anything?" Penny asked in disappointment.

"On the contrary, it may be something of very great importance," he returned soberly. "I'll take this to Headquarters. We have an expert on codes who should be able to break it in a short while."

The girls hoped that Jerry would invite them to accompany him, but he did not do so. Instead he said:

"Penny, you were telling me that Mrs. Deline had buried a package in the sand. Any luck in finding it?"

"Not a bit."

"You don't think that she went back there and dug it up herself?"

"We didn't see any footprints."

"How did you mark the place?"

"By a stick that someone removed."

"Not a very reliable way to take observations," Jerry remarked. "Ever try the clock system?"

The girls looked blank.

"For example," Jerry illustrated, "imagine that the landscape is like the face of a clock. Now what do you see on the hour of two?"

"I don't get it," Louise complained.

"Oh, I do!" laughed Penny. "A big tree!"

"That's right," agreed Jerry. "And at the hour of six?"

"Why, a signboard!" chuckled Penny. "At the hour of seven there's a big sand dune!"

"If you picture things in your mind as if they're on the face of a clock it's much easier to remember and keep them in proper proportion. Now, using that same system can you recall anything more about the place where Mrs. Deline buried the package?"

"Not very much," Penny admitted. "I didn't take notations at the time."

"Speaking of signboards, I remember one," Louise said thoughtfully. "It was a long distance back from the beach, slightly to the right. A cigarette advertisement."

"That's right!" agreed Penny.

"Perhaps that will help some," Jerry said. "We'll have to find the package."

"Then you believe Mrs. Deline is an Enemy Agent?" Penny asked eagerly.

"I've thought so for quite a while now," Jerry admitted. "I didn't say it for fear of building up your hopes. Anyhow, we've got to work quietly in this business."

"Poor Dad," Penny murmured. "I'm afraid it will break him up to learn the truth. Do you say I should tell him right away, Jerry?"

"Why not?" Jerry demanded, his eyes amused. "Your father may have a few things to break to you too, Penny."

"Meaning what?"

"I'll let your father do his own talking," Jerry said, getting up from the hotel bench. "Have to go now."

"Wait!" Penny pleaded. "You've not told us anything. Do you think Mrs. Deline has been aiding that flier who escaped from a Canadian prison camp?"

Jerry deliberately let the question pass. "Listen!" he said urgently. "I may not see you girls again until after dinner. Want to help me tonight?"

"Doing what?" Penny asked.

"I want you to lead me to the place where Mrs. Deline buried that package."

"We'll do our best."

"Then if I don't see you earlier, meet me here at nine o'clock. It should be dark by that time."

"We'll be here," Penny promised, her eyes glowing.

At dinner that night the girls told Mr. Parker of

their appointment to meet Jerry. Penny would have explained about the package, but before she could do so, Mrs. Deline joined the group. Mr. Parker immediately invited her to dine with them. To the annoyance of Penny and Louise she accepted with alacrity.

The girls fully expected that Mrs. Deline would make some reference to the incident of the afternoon. Instead she avoided the subject, talking of her experiences in China and the Orient. Despite their prejudice, Penny and Louise were compelled in all honesty to acknowledge to themselves that the widow was a brilliant, entertaining conversationalist.

Over the coffee cups Mrs. Deline spoke casually of a play which was showing at the local theatre. Before Penny could say a word, Mr. Parker had suggested that he buy tickets for the night's performance.

"I'd love to go," Mrs. Deline accepted instantly.

"Good!" Mr. Parker approved. "I'll get four tickets."

"Two," Penny corrected grimly. "Louise and I already have an appointment."

"That's so," Mr. Parker recalled belatedly.

Mrs. Deline looked so pleased that Penny was sorely tempted to abandon the meeting with Jerry. Only the realization that the task ahead was vitally important, kept her silent.

At eight o'clock Mr. Parker and Mrs. Deline left

the hotel for the theatre. With an hour to kill, Penny and Louise were very restless. They read the evening paper and watched the clock.

"Here's an interesting news item," Penny remarked, indicating a brief story on an inner page of the paper. "It says an enemy submarine was sighted not many miles from here—just off the coast."

"Did they get it?" Louise inquired absently.

"I guess not. The story doesn't say, except that the air patrol dropped bombs."

"Wonder what a single sub was doing so close here?" Louise speculated. "Oh, well, we've nothing to fear."

A clock chimed the hour of nine. On the first stroke, the girls arose and hastened to keep their appointment with Jerry. The night was closing in dark. Along the shore no lights were showing for the dim-out was rigidly enforced at Sunset Beach.

"Where's Jerry?" Penny asked as they reached the bench where they had promised to meet him. "Hope he didn't forget."

Ten minutes elapsed. Penny was examining the luminous dial of her wrist watch when someone came striding down the gravel path.

"Hello," Jerry greeted the girls. "Sorry to have kept you waiting. All set for adventure?"

"Lead on!" Penny laughed.

Taking each of them by an elbow, Jerry guided

the girls down the deserted beach. Twice they passed guards who merely stared and allowed them to pass unchallenged.

"Any news about that code?" Penny questioned as they walked along.

"It's a tough one to break," Jerry replied briefly. "Experts have been trying to take it apart ever since I left you girls this afternoon."

"Then it really is something?" Penny asked, scarcely daring to hope.

"It certainly is," Jerry replied heartily. "We're pretty sure now that Mrs. Deline is mixed up in a bad business. But we can't act until we know absolutely."

"This will be a horrible shock to Dad," Penny remarked. "He's at the theatre with Mrs. Deline now."

"At least she's out of the way, so there's no chance she'll see us at work," Jerry commented. "Think you can find the place to dig?"

Penny had marked it well in her mind, but at night everything looked different. After some uncertainty, the girls agreed upon the dune where the package had been buried.

"With the tide low we'll have plenty of time," Jerry said. "Well, let's go! Was the package buried deep?"

"Not more than a foot," Penny supplied.

"Then if it's here, we'll find it. Let's block this area off and cover it systematically."

For an hour the trio toiled. Twice one of the beach guards passed by and Penny was surprised that he paid no heed to what they were doing.

"Orders!" Jerry chuckled. "You didn't think we could come out here and prow around without questions being asked? The guard was tipped off. He'll help us by whistling if anyone comes this way."

Louise, who had been industriously digging, gave a low cry.

"Find something?" Jerry demanded.

"I'm not sure. I think so."

The next instant Louise lifted a small package from its sand tomb. Before Jerry could warn her, she had torn apart the pasteboard cover.

"Why, it contains pencils!" she exclaimed in disgust. "Pencils!"

Jerry leaped to her side. One glance and he took the box from her.

"Those objects may look like pencils," he drawled. "But take it from me, they're a bit more deadly."

Penny had moved close. She and Louise stared in awe at the collection.

"Bombs," Jerry explained briefly. "One of these little pencils contains enough explosive to blow us all to Kingdom Come!"

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

THE CARDBOARD box contained in addition to the pencil bombs a shiny knife and several grooved, pear-shaped objects.

"What are those?" Louise asked curiously. "They look like hand grenades."

"That's what they are," said Jerry, lifting one from the box. "It's a mighty useful weapon for close fighting. A strong man can throw a grenade twenty-five to thirty-five yards and it does damage over a large area."

Penny gingerly inspected one of the grenades.

"It won't bite you," Jerry laughed. "Nor will it explode in your hand. When you're ready to throw a grenade you hold it with the lever under your fingers. Just before you toss it, pull the pin."

"Isn't it apt to explode while you're holding it?" Penny asked dubiously.

"Not while the lever is held. When the grenade

leaves the hand, the lever flies off. Then the fuse ignites and in about seven seconds you have your explosion."

"Nice little gadgets," Penny said. She replaced the grenade in its box and ran a finger over the sharp edge of the steel-bladed knife.

"Mrs. Deline evidently planted these weapons here for someone else to use," Jerry remarked. "We'll put them back just as they were."

"Put them back!" Penny echoed. "Why, Jerry, wouldn't that be playing right into their hands? Shouldn't we destroy these things?"

"No, it's much wiser to have the place watched."

Light dawned upon Penny. "Oh, I see!" she exclaimed. "In that way you hope to learn Mrs. Deline's accomplices!"

"Exactly."

Jerry replaced everything in the box which he carefully buried in the sand. Then he obliterated all freshly made footmarks.

"It may be necessary to watch this place for days," he said thoughtfully.

"And what of Mrs. Deline?" Penny asked. "Will she be allowed complete freedom?"

"That's for my superiors to decide. It seems to me, though, that more is to be gained by allowing her to remain at liberty than by arresting her."

"I'm all for jail myself," said Penny.

"Just be patient," Jerry smiled. "And whatever you do, don't drop a hint to Mrs. Deline of what we suspect."

"She knows I dislike her."

"That's all right, but don't let her guess that you consider her guilty of anything more serious than making a play for your father."

"What about Dad? Shouldn't I warn him?"

"Let me take care of that part," Jerry smiled.

"All right," Penny agreed reluctantly. "Just be sure that you don't muff it. Remember, you're playing with my future!"

Jerry finished smoothing out the footprints in the sand and then escorted the girls to the hotel.

"I must report to Headquarters without delay," he said, pausing at the hotel entrance. "Don't worry about the package. We'll have the place watched every minute."

After Jerry had gone, Penny and Louise entered the hotel.

"Is my father here yet?" Penny asked the desk clerk.

"No, Miss. And there's a message for him. As soon as he comes in he's to call Major Gregg."

Penny repeated the name thoughtfully. "That's a new one on me," she remarked. "Dad seems to have friends I know nothing about."

"Oh, the Major comes to the hotel frequently," the clerk returned, smiling. "He and your father are well acquainted."

As the girls crossed the lobby to a drinking fountain, Louise said teasingly:

"I'm afraid you've lost track of your father lately, Penny. You've been so upset about Mrs. Deline that you've scarcely noticed anything or anyone else."

"Dad's been holding out on me, that's evident. Wonder what he's to call Major Gregg about?"

"Why not wait up and see?"

"Not a bad idea," Penny approved instantly. "He and Mrs. Deline should be getting in anytime now."

"I'm not waiting up," announced Louise with a sleepy yawn. "In fact, I'm on my way to bed this minute."

To prove her words she started for the elevator. Penny debated whether or not to follow and finally decided to remain in the lobby.

An hour elapsed. Penny was half asleep by the time Mrs. Deline and Mr. Parker entered the hotel together. They were chatting animatedly and would not have seen her had she not scrambled from the wing chair.

Seeing Penny, Mrs. Deline quickly bade Mr. Parker good night and vanished into an elevator.

"You shouldn't have waited up," Mr. Parker chided his daughter. "Why, it's nearly midnight."

"There's an important message for you, Dad. You're to call Major Gregg."

Mr. Parker looked disconcerted. "How long ago did that call come, Penny?"

"About an hour ago. Or that's when I learned of it."

Mr. Parker went quickly to a telephone booth and was gone for some time. When he returned his face was animated.

"Good news?" Penny asked eagerly.

"Not exactly," Mr. Parker replied, sliding into a chair beside her and dropping his voice. "A message from Interceptor Headquarters. Monitoring machines have traced the outlaw radio station again. The broadcast finished about an hour ago."

"And where was the station located this time, Dad?"

"Seemingly at or near the lighthouse."

"The lighthouse!" Penny exclaimed. She was so startled that her voice rose to a high pitch, attracting the attention of a passing bellboy.

"Not so loud, Penny," her father warned. "The strange thing was that the broadcast seemed to come from a cave, the same as before, although the monitoring machines charted it as being close to the lighthouse."

"The only one I know about near the Point is Crystal Cave," Penny said thoughtfully. "Dad, maybe the broadcast did come from the lighthouse!"

"That's government property, Penny, and the man in charge is beyond suspicion. Furthermore, the deep, echo effect couldn't come from anywhere except a cave."

"Unless it were a sound effect, Dad."

"What's that?" Mr. Parker asked, startled. "I don't get you, Penny."

"I mean, maybe the cave set-up is just a sound effect and nothing more. Only the other night I heard one in a radio play and it sounded as if the actors really were in a cave. Isn't it done by an echo chamber or something of the sort?"

"That would be possible," Mr. Parker agreed. "At Interceptor Headquarters it was assumed that a mistake had been made in charting the location of the station."

"Then the lighthouse hasn't been investigated?"

"Not to my knowledge."

"Well, it should be!" Penny exclaimed. "Louise and I were there today and we saw—"

"Yes?" Mr. Parker questioned as she suddenly broke off.

"We saw a lot that didn't look right," Penny finished, deciding not to bring Mrs. Deline's name into the discussion. "Mr. McCoy had visitors and while they were there he kept us locked up."

"My word! Why didn't you report to the police?"

"Well, we weren't entirely sure," Penny said lamely. "The door just closed and locked, and Mr. McCoy let on that it had a trick latch. Then he released us, but not until after the visitors had gone."

"Did you see the persons?"

"No, we only heard their voices. We weren't able to overhear any of the conversation."

Without explaining what he intended to do, Mr. Parker again closed himself into a telephone booth. Not until he returned did he tell Penny that he had called Interceptor Headquarters and that Army men had been sent to the lighthouse to make a thorough check-up.

"Now it's late," he said briskly, "and you're overdue for bed, Penny. Better fly up."

"Aren't you coming?"

"Not just now. I have a little unfinished business."

Penny hesitated, unwilling to go to bed when she sensed adventure in the offing. As she groped in her mind for an excuse to remain, the doors at the front entrance to the hotel began to spin. Jerry came hurrying into the lobby. Seeing Penny and her father he made a straight line for them.

"The code's been broken!" he announced, addressing Penny.

"What did they learn, Jerry?" she asked eagerly.

"It's just as you thought, Penny." Jerry dropped his bombshell. "Mrs. Deline definitely is an Enemy Agent. Apparently she was sent to Sunset Beach to aid that escaped prisoner I told you about!"

NIGHT ADVENTURE

AS JERRY made the startling announcement, Penny glanced anxiously at her father. In the excitement of the moment she had not thought how much of a shock it might be to him to learn that Mrs. Deline was an agent employed by a foreign country. To her astonishment, he looked neither surprised nor dismayed.

"So you have the proof, Jerry!" Mr. Parker exclaimed. "That's fine! But what's all this about a code? How did you stumble onto it?"

"No time for details now," Jerry answered tersely. "Penny turned the trick—she and Louise saw Mrs. Deline bury a package in the sand."

"And Mrs. Deline brought that package from the lighthouse," Penny interposed eagerly. "Mr. McCoy must have given it to her."

"What's the plan of action?" Mr. Parker demanded. "Army men already have gone to the lighthouse to search that place thoroughly."

"Our job is to keep watch of the dune where the package was buried. Naturally we have no way of knowing what time anyone will show up there. It may be an all night wait."

"I'll be with you in a minute," Mr. Parker declared. "Just as soon as I get an overcoat."

He started toward the elevator, then came back to the group.

"What about Mrs. Deline?" he asked. "She's here in the hotel. Went to her room only a few minutes ago."

"She'll be placed under arrest," Jerry said. "Better call her on the telephone and get her down here. Don't let her suspect that you think anything is wrong."

Mr. Parker vanished into the nearest telephone booth.

"I can't understand it," Penny murmured to Jerry. "I was sure Dad was head over heels in love with Mrs. Deline. Why, it didn't even seem to ruffle him when he learned the truth about her."

Jerry grinned. "Maybe," he drawled, "that was because he knew all the time."

Penny was dumbfounded. "You mean—" she

stammered, "You mean that Dad's been acting a part? Pretending to admire Mrs. Deline while actually he didn't?"

"Something like that. You see, your Dad became interested in the outlaw radio station and the men who operate it. By making inquiries before he left Riverview, he obtained information that made him think Mrs. Deline might be involved in some way. He knew she never had been in China but spent many years in Japan. He learned also that instead of being a newspaper correspondent, she had carried on secret work for various governments."

"Dad knew all that! And he never let on to me!"

"He couldn't very well, Penny. If you had guessed the truth, you'd have given it away by your manner—no matter how much you tried to act natural."

"What a little nit-wit I've been!"

"You have not," Jerry denied warmly. "Anyone else would have acted the same. Without knowing it, you helped your father a lot. You turned up evidence he never could have obtained alone."

"Where do you fit into the picture, Jerry? Did Dad send for you?"

"You don't send for anyone in the Army," Jerry explained, grinning. "By pure luck I was assigned here on a special mission. Your father learned I was coming, so we united forces."

"Then you've both known from the first about Mrs. Deline?"

"We've had a dark brown suspicion, Penny. But no proof until tonight."

Penny drew a deep breath. Before she could ask another question, her father came hurrying down the hotel corridor.

"Mrs. Deline's not in her room!" he reported. "She doesn't answer."

"She went upstairs only a few minutes ago," Penny recalled.

"Yes, she did, but she's not there now."

"Maybe she's asleep," Jerry said, "and failed to hear the 'phone. We'll have to check."

Without explaining why the matter was urgent, Mr. Parker arranged with the desk clerk to have one of the hotel maids go to Mrs. Deline's room. While the trio waited in the upstairs corridor, the woman rapped several times on the bedroom door, and failing to get a response, unlocked it with her master key.

"Mrs. Deline!" she called, softly at first, then in a louder voice.

There was no answer.

The maid then snapped on the light. "Why, there's no one here!" she cried. "The bed's not been slept in!"

"That's what I was afraid of," muttered Mr. Parker.

With Jerry and Penny, he entered the bedroom. Everything was in perfect order. However, Mrs. Deline's suitcase was gone and all her belongings had been removed from the closet.

"She's skipped without paying her room rent!" the maid exclaimed. "I'll call the manager!"

Penny was peering into the waste paper basket beside the desk.

"Look!" she drew the attention of her father and Jerry. "Burned letters and papers!"

Digging into the basket, she brought up several charred sheets of paper. They were unreadable and crumpled in her hand.

"This was a bad break for us—Mrs. Deline getting away!" Jerry exclaimed in disgust. "Evidently her work at Sunset Beach is finished. She's moving on to another pasture."

"But she can't be far away," Penny reasoned. "After all, we know when she came to her room."

"There still may be a chance to nab her," Mr. Parker said. "We'll notify the police to guard all the roads and the airport. I'll report to Major Gregg too."

Without awaiting the arrival of the hotel manager, the trio hastened to the lobby. There Jerry and Mr. Parker made several telephone calls.

"Now let's be on our way up the beach," Jerry

urged anxiously. "We've killed too much time as it is."

Penny half expected that her father would refuse permission for her to go along. To her delight he merely said:

"I suppose there's no keeping you here, Penny. Well, come with us. I guess you've earned the right by your good work."

It was a dark night, warm but misty. No lights were showing outside the hotel, though far up the beach the powerful lighthouse beacon cut swathes across the black sea.

"What's the plan?" Mr. Parker asked Jerry.

"The entire coast for fifty miles is being watched. I thought just on a chance we might keep vigil at the place where Mrs. Deline buried the package of explosives. Someone may show up there. On the other hand, Penny tipped off the fact that she knew where the bundle was buried."

"Mrs. Deline watched Louise and me through a spy glass," Penny recalled ruefully. "She knew we didn't find the package though."

"That's our assignment anyhow," Jerry said. "To keep watch of that particular place until relieved by Army men."

The Parker car was on the hotel lot close by. Getting it, the trio took the beach road but stopped some

distance from the lighthouse. Not wishing the car to attract the attention of any passer-by, it was left parked on a private driveway. Jerry, Penny and her father then crossed the dunes afoot and proceeded up the beach until they came to their station.

"Think this is the place?" Penny asked skeptically.

"I know it is," Jerry replied. "Remember what I told you about taking observations? Let's see if the package is still here?"

He began digging in one of the dunes. Almost at once he came upon the box of explosives.

"Exactly as we left it," he reported, replacing the sand. "No one's been here."

"I doubt anyone will come," Mr. Parker commented. "Probably afraid."

High overhead and out of sight, Penny heard the drone of planes on coastal patrol. She stared up into the dark sky and then toward the sea. The tide was coming in and long rolling waves washed the beach, dashed themselves on the shoreline and retreated.

"We'll have to get down out of sight," Jerry warned. "Mustn't be seen from the road or the ocean either one."

"How about this spot?" Mr. Parker suggested, pointing to a hollow between two giant dunes.

The place seemed exactly right, so the trio flattened themselves on the sand. Jerry looked at the luminous dial of his watch.

"One fifteen," he announced. "No sign of activity."

"And no sign of any soldiers," Mr. Parker added. "I hope that whoever is to take over here shows up before long."

"I don't," Penny said, snuggling close between her father and Jerry. "I'm having fun!"

"If anything should develop, it's apt to be serious business," Jerry warned. "I'm inclined to think that we tipped our hand and nothing will happen."

An hour elapsed. During that time there was no sound save the roar of the restless sea. The warm sand made a comfortable couch, and despite her best intentions, Penny caught herself dozing. She had all she could do to keep awake.

"What time is it now?" she presently asked.

"Two thirty-five," Jerry answered. "It doesn't look as if there's to be any activity, but then the night's young."

"The night may be, but I'm not," Mr. Parker grumbled, shifting into a more comfortable position. "Wonder when our relief is to show up?"

"Must be some mix up on orders. We're probably stuck here for the night."

"In that case, Penny should return to the hotel."

"Oh, no, Dad! Anyway, if I left now I might attract the attention of anyone watching this place."

"You thought that one up!" her father chuckled.

"Except for ourselves, there's no person within a quarter of a mile of this place."

"You're wrong about that," murmured Jerry, stiffening to alert attention.

"What's up, Jerry?" Mr. Parker said quickly. "You act as if you were seeing things!"

"I am, Chief! Look to the right—between us and the lighthouse!"

Mr. Parker and Penny gazed intently in the direction indicated.

"Can't see a thing," Mr. Parker whispered. "Your eyes must be tricking you, Jerry."

"Wait just a minute."

Even as Jerry spoke, a shadowy figure emerged from the mists. The man came swiftly down the beach, making no sound as he walked. When he was very close, the revolving beacon of the lighthouse singled him out for a fleeting instant. Brief as was the moment of illumination, Penny recognized the man.

"George Emory!" she whispered tensely. "What's he doing here?"

CHAPTER

24

OUT OF THE SEA

THE ANSWER to Penny's whispered question soon became obvious. George Emory looked carefully about the windswept beach. The three tense watchers thought that he might approach the dune where they lay hidden, but he did not.

Instead, the man paused while several yards away and gazed toward the sea. A moment he stood thus, silhouetted against the sky. Then using a glowing flashlight, he began making wide sweeps with his arm.

"A signal!" Jerry whispered. "He's trying to attract the attention of a boat out at sea!"

"Shall we go for him?" asked Mr. Parker.

"Wait!" Jerry advised. "He's not the only one we're after. We're stalking bigger game."

At intervals for the next fifteen minutes, George Emory repeated the flashlight signals. Then he turned off the light and waited.

Anxiously, Jerry, Penny and Mr. Parker kept their faces turned to the sea. They sensed that the hour of action was at hand, and it worried them that Army men had failed to arrive.

"Look, Dad!" Penny suddenly whispered. She had glimpsed far from shore a long shadowy object which easily could be a boat. No lights were showing nor had she heard any sound.

"I don't see a thing," Mr. Parker whispered back. "Yes! Now I do! Jove! It looks like a submarine that's surfaced. I can make out the conning tower!"

"But why would it dare come here?" Penny speculated. "Won't it be detected by the patrol planes?"

"Tonight's a bad night," Jerry pointed out. "Besides, the shore is so indented at this point of coast that perfect protection is almost impossible. They're sending a boat, that's sure!"

A small craft had been launched from the wave-washed deck of the submarine. Manned by two men who rowed with ruffled oars, it slowly approached the shore. When it was very close the watchers behind the sand dune saw by its grotesque sausage shape that it was a large, rubber boat. Like a gray ghost it slid over the water.

Mr. Parker gripped Penny's hand in an encouraging squeeze.

"Wish you were safe at the hotel," he whispered. "I was a fool to let you come."

Penny's heart pounded but she shook her head vigorously. Not for anything would she have missed the adventure. However, she was cool headed enough to realize that the situation was not shaping up well for her father and Jerry.

There were two men visible in the rubber boat, unquestionably armed. Then George Emory must be reckoned with and the arrival of others might be expected at any moment. Jerry carried a revolver but her father had no weapon. Already it was too late for any member of the trio to safely go for help.

"That sub may intend to land Secret Agents here," Jerry speculated. "But from the code message we deciphered, it's more likely they plan to take aboard one or more passengers."

"Perhaps that escaped flier," Penny supplied.

"He's a valuable man to them. Well worth the risk they're taking to try to rescue him."

"If passengers are to go aboard, where are they?" Penny whispered. "There's no one here but George Emory."

"We must wait and watch. We'll soon see enough or I miss my guess."

The rubber boat had reached the surf and was be-

ing churned by the waves. Two men in full military uniform, leaped out and guided the boat to the beach. George Emory waded out to meet them. Shaking the hand of each, he spoke rapidly in German. Though Mr. Parker understood the language, he was unable to catch a word.

Tensely, the trio waited and watched. At any moment they feared that the men from the submarine might seek the cache of explosives hidden not far away. Soberly Jerry and Mr. Parker considered trying to reach the box in the sand. To do so they must cross an open, unprotected span of beach with every likelihood of being seen.

"Let's wait and see what happens," Mr. Parker advised. "We shouldn't risk calling attention to ourselves."

George Emory and his two companions obviously were awaiting someone. Nervously they paced the beach. Several times Mr. Emory looked at his watch. Then from far down the road came the sound of a car traveling at high speed. Tires screamed in protest as the auto came to a sudden halt on the paved road back from the beach.

"That's why they've waited!" Jerry whispered.

Barely a minute elapsed before two figures were seen coming swiftly from the direction of the road. A man and a woman crawled through the bushes,

under the fence, and walked hurriedly across deep sand to the beach.

"Mrs. Deline!" Penny identified the woman. "The man with her is the same fellow who stole food from our camp!"

"I'd know his face from photographs I've seen," contributed Jerry. "He's Oscar Kleinbrock, escaped German prisoner. The man I was sent here to trace!"

Mrs. Deline and her companion reached the group of men who awaited them.

"You are five minutes late," George Emory reproved.

"Can we help it?" Mrs. Deline snapped. "We're lucky to be here at all. Do you know that the road is being watched?"

"By whom?"

"Army men. We were nearly stopped but were able to turn off into the thicket and wait."

"Then there's no time to waste in talk," George Emory said curtly. Turning, he spoke to the German flier in his own language.

"He's telling him to get aboard the rubber boat," Mr. Parker interpreted tensely. "Now they're saying goodbye to Emory and Mrs. Deline."

"Somehow we must hold them all here!" Jerry whispered grimly.

"It's two against five. And they're armed."

Mr. Parker and Jerry looked at each other, fully realizing how slim was their chance of success. They were not thinking of themselves but of Penny and what could happen to her if they failed. Mr. Parker touched her arm.

"Penny," he whispered. "Slip away in the darkness and make a dash for the hotel. Jerry and I will try to hold them until help comes. Just keep low as you run or those fiends may take a pot-shot at you."

Penny would not desert her father and Jerry. Stubbornly, she shook her head.

"We want to know that you are safe," Jerry urged. "Please go while you still have a chance. You can help us most by bringing help."

Penny's determination to remain, weakened. Yet reason told her she never could reach the hotel and return with help in time to do any good. It dawned upon her that Jerry was only saying what he did to get her safely away.

"If only we had the box of explosives!" she whispered. "With it we might have a chance against those men!"

"It's too late to dig up the box now," said Jerry. "We probably couldn't find it without a light. And the noise we'd make—"

"Let me try," Penny interrupted.

"All right, see if you can get your hands on the

box," her father agreed suddenly. "Slip back of the dune, and then circle. Don't try to cross the beach. Be careful! Remember the least sound will bring a hail of bullets."

Penny nodded and slipped away into the darkness, crawling on hands and knees. Barely had she left the shelter of the big sand dune than she heard two shots fired in quick succession.

"Those came from Jerry's revolver!" she thought. "Oh, it was a trick to get me safely away! Now he and Dad are in for fireworks!"

Raising her head above the protecting sand dune, Penny saw why Jerry had fired. The rubber boat was being launched. To delay the attack would mean that the entire party might escape.

"They'll all get away!" Penny thought in dismay. "How can Jerry and Dad hold them single handed?"

George Emory returned Jerry's fire with deadly aim. The bullets bit into the dune, throwing up little geysers of sand.

"Launch the boat!" he shouted savagely to the men from the submarine. "Get away while you can! Be quick!"

Jerry and Mr. Parker were determined that the party should not escape. As the men sought to launch the rubber boat, they made a concerted rush for the German flier who was to be taken aboard the waiting

submarine. Caught by surprise, he went down beneath their blows.

Fearful of hitting his own man, George Emory dared not fire again. Instead, he and the crewmen of the submarine fell upon Jerry and Mr. Parker. In the melee, one person could not be distinguished from another.

"Fools! Fools!" cried Mrs. Deline as she watched the fierce, uneven struggle. "There is no time to be lost!"

Jerry and Mr. Parker were putting up the fight of their lives, but they were no match for four able bodied, trained men. Penny, desperate with anxiety, saw that the struggle could end only in one way—disaster for Jerry and her father.

"If I had that box of explosives maybe I could help them!" flashed through her mind.

Rolling over a dune, she ran to the place near the fence where she thought the cache was buried. Frantically she clawed and dug at the sand. She could not find the box.

"It must be here!" she told herself desperately. "Or was it hidden in the next dune?"

She tried another place slightly to the right. As she dug, she heard a sound behind her. Turning swiftly, she saw Mrs. Deline starting across the beach toward her.

"Oh, no, you don't!" the woman shouted.

Penny's hand encountered something hard and firm. The box of explosives! Digging wildly, she lifted it from the bed of sand and sprang to her feet. Her fingers closed upon one of the hand grenades.

"Get back!" she ordered Mrs. Deline, balancing herself as if to throw.

The woman stopped short, then retreated a few steps. But only for a moment was she frightened.

"Why, you infant, you couldn't throw a grenade!" she jeered. "You don't know how. Besides, you haven't the nerve!"

"Get back!" Penny ordered again. "I warn you."

Mrs. Deline laughed scornfully and came on.

Even the thought of throwing a hand grenade terrified Penny. She knew that she could not deliberately harm Mrs. Deline or even the men who were mercilessly beating her father and Jerry. Yet she had to do something.

"Maybe I can destroy the rubber boat!" she thought. "It's far enough away so that no one should be hurt by the explosion."

Whirling away from Mrs. Deline, Penny faced the sea. Fixing her eyes on her target, the rubber boat at the water's edge, she hurled the grenade.

"Idiot!" cried Mrs. Deline, flinging herself flat on the sand to protect her face from flying fragments.

Penny did likewise. The grenade dropped with a thud on the sand beside the rubber boat. Her aim had been perfect. But there was no explosion. Belatedly, Penny realized that she had forgotten to pull the safety pin.

Mrs. Deline kept her face buried beneath her arms and did not yet know what had happened. Sick with the knowledge that she had failed, Penny was desperate. Her father and Jerry were being cruelly beaten by their opponents. In another minute they would be overpowered and the Germans would escape to the waiting submarine.

"I can't let them get away!" Penny whispered. "I must do something!"

Remembering the pencil bombs, she groped in the cardboard box for them. They were not there. Instead, her fingers closed upon the sharp bladed knife.

"I'll slash the rubber boat!" she thought. "I'll try to make a hole in it!"

Before Mrs. Deline realized what the girl was about, Penny darted down the beach. The men from the submarine did not see her. Reaching the rubber boat, she leaped into it. Working with desperate haste, she jabbed the knife through the bottom. The material was tough and it took all of her strength to make a long jagged gash. Water seeped in, slowly at first, then faster.

"I've done it!" Penny thought jubilantly. "I've done it!"

Her triumph was fleeting. The next instant the girl was struck a hard stunning blow from behind. As she collapsed in a limp little heap on the sand, she dimly saw the cruel, angry face of Mrs. Deline. Then all went black and she knew no more.

A SCOOP FOR UNCLE SAM

PENNY OPENED her eyes and wondered where she was. For a moment she could remember nothing of what had transpired. Gradually, she realized that she was lying down, her head pillowed in someone's lap. She seemed to be in a fast-moving motor boat for she could hear the wash of waves against the craft. In panic she decided that she must be a prisoner en-route to the German submarine. She struggled to sit up.

"Easy there, partner," said a soothing voice.

Penny twisted sideways to look at the speaker. "Jerry!" she whispered.

"You're all right," he said, pressing her gently back. "We'll get you to a doctor in a few minutes."

"A doctor, my eye!" Penny protested with spirit.

"That was a nasty blow Mrs. Deline gave you on the head," contributed another voice.

Penny turned again and saw her father. His shirt was half torn off and there was a long gash on his cheek.

"Dad, you're hurt!"

"Nothing but a few scratches, Penny. Jerry took worse punishment than I did. But you should see the other fellows!"

"What happened?" Penny asked. "Where am I anyhow?"

"In a patrol boat bound for the hotel."

"But what happened on the beach? The last I remember was when I tried to slash the rubber boat."

"You not only tried, you did!" chuckled Jerry. "Mrs. Deline struck you on the head with something—maybe a rock—and you went down for the count. About that time, some of the Army boys arrived. Mrs. Deline and her crowd tried to make a get-away, but the boat couldn't be launched."

"Then what happened?" Penny demanded as Jerry paused for breath.

"The two members of the sub crew tried to swim. They were picked up by a patrol boat that had been drawn to the locality by the gun fire."

"And Mrs. Deline?"

"She and her pal Emory, together with the escaped flier, struck off across the sand dunes."

"They didn't get away?"

"Not on your life. They reached the road and there found a nice reception awaiting them! Right now the three are lodged at Headquarters."

Penny took a deep breath. Her head was throbbing but she scarcely felt the pain.

"What about Jim McCoy at the lighthouse?" she inquired.

"He was taken into custody earlier in the evening. A portable broadcasting outfit was found on the premises."

"Then Mr. McCoy really was the man responsible for those mysterious broadcasts—the Voice from the Cave?"

"No doubt he had helpers," Mr. Parker contributed. "We expect to track down most of the ring now that the leaders have been captured. At any rate, we've put an end to the broadcasts. Your other theory was right too, Penny."

"What theory, Dad?"

"That the cave effect was produced by an echo chamber."

"Then no broadcast ever originated in a cave?"

"Probably not. We know McCoy shifted locations frequently. Tonight was the first time he ever dared broadcast from the lighthouse."

"And what of the old beachcomber, Jake Skagway?"

"Just a beachcomber," Jerry answered. "He had no connection with Emory or Mrs. Deline."

Penny lay perfectly still for a few minutes, gazing up at the dark sky. A few stars pricked the black canopy above her, and now and then a quarter moon peeped from behind a cloud screen.

"How did I get aboard this boat?" she presently inquired.

"Another patrol boat came by," Jerry explained. "In fact, after all the fireworks, just about everyone in Sunset Beach arrived on the scene. We wanted to get you to a doctor so we took the first transportation that offered."

"Almost there now too," added Mr. Parker.

Penny sat up. The shore was dark but she could dimly see the dark Crystal Inn hotel.

"I don't need a doctor," she laughed. "I'm feeling better every minute. My, won't Louise be green with envy when she learns what she missed!"

"I'd say she was lucky," Mr. Parker corrected. "Penny, you don't seem to realize what a narrow escape we all had."

"That's right," added Jerry, "those men were desperate, and they'd have stopped at nothing. I guess we owe our lives to you, Penny."

Penny loved the praise. Nevertheless, she replied with a show of modesty:

"Oh, I didn't do a thing, Jerry. As a matter of record, I nearly messed up the show. When I threw that hand grenade I forgot to pull the safety pin."

"I'm glad you did," chuckled Jerry. "If it had exploded, we might not be here now."

Penny sat very still, thinking over what had happened. Events were a bit hazy in her mind and many questions remained unanswered.

"The submarine?" she asked after a moment.

"Sunk," Jerry replied. "One of our patrol planes scored a direct hit."

"I guess that brings me up to date," Penny sighed. "There's only one thing that bothers me."

"What's that?" inquired her father.

"Did you know who Mrs. Deline was when you invited her to come with us to Sunset Beach?"

"No, but I had a healthy suspicion that she might be working against our country, Penny. I first met Mrs. Deline at the Club. However, she was rather transparent in making a play for my attention. In checking up I discovered that she never had been in China and never had written a newspaper story in her life. When she practically invited herself to ride with us to Sunset Beach, I thought I'd try to find out more about her little game."

"I acted so silly about everything," Penny acknowledged, deeply ashamed. "I'm sorry, Dad."

"You needn't be, Penny. At times you were rude

to Mrs. Deline which was wrong. But your actions served a good purpose by keeping the woman so diverted that she never was on her guard."

Shore was very close. As the powerful engines of the motor boat became muted, Penny said wistfully:

"Now that your work is done here, Jerry, I suppose you'll be winging off to some far corner of the country."

"Not for a few days at least," he reassured her. "I'm expecting a furlough and I'll spend it right here at Sunset Beach. We'll cram those days full of fun, Penny. We'll swim and golf and dance. We'll make every minute count."

The boat grated gently against the dock and a sailor leaped out to make the craft fast. Mr. Parker and Jerry helped Penny ashore. Though she tried to stand steady upon her feet, the boards rocked beneath her.

"Hook on," invited Jerry, offering an arm.

Mr. Parker supported her on the other side, and thus they walked slowly toward the hotel.

"The Three Musketeers!" chuckled the editor. "'One for all, and all for one.'"

"We do make a trio," agreed Penny. "Tonight it seems just as it did when we were together in River-view working on a big news story. There's one difference though."

"What's that?" asked Jerry.

"Tonight we were actors in a little drama that should be page one on any newspaper. Yet neither of you news hawks so much as spoke of trying to get a scoop for the *Riverview Star*."

"Good reason," rumbled Mr. Parker. "The story of what happened tonight may never be published."

"I understand, Dad. If the news were printed now it might give valuable information to the enemy."

Penny paused to catch her breath. With Jerry and her father still supporting her, she turned to face the restless sea. The patrol boat had slipped away into the darkness. Far up shore, unmindful that her faithless master had gone, the bright beacon from the lighthouse swept the water at regular intervals. Nothing seemed changed.

"Curtain going down on one of the best adventures of my life," Penny said softly. "Who cares that the *Riverview Star* missed the story? Why, this was an A-1 scoop for Uncle Sam!"